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# Cultural Anxiety and Arthur Miller's The Crucible

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# UNDERSTANDING BY DESIGN

## Unit Cover Page

Unit Title: Cultural Anxiety and Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*

Grade Level: 10th

Subject/Topic Area(s): Honors American Literature

Designed By: Lauren Lee

Time Frame: 35 59-minute class periods

School District: Littleton Public Schools

School: Arapahoe High School

School Address and Phone: 2201 East Dry Creek Road; Centennial, Colorado 80122. 303/ 347-6050.

### **Brief Summary of Unit**

This unit is designed to begin the school year with a study of culture as well as anxieties that permeate cultures and perpetuate fear and conflict. Ultimately, students should reach the greater understanding that fears produced by a group mentality are oftentimes a result of the people in power enabling that mentality. These fears further separate those in power and the people they control, and frequently result in that culture committing acts they might otherwise find morally deplorable but nonetheless condone out of group think.

Within the context of these greater understandings, students will work on summary-response writing skills, understanding drama through study of vocabulary as well as dramatic performances, and also understanding and analyzing a variety of texts including Miller's play and M. Night Shyamalan's *The Village*.

Many of the strategies and ideas this unit employs were inspired or created by my colleagues, Kendra Ackerman and Kristin Leclaire.

**Unit: Cultural Anxiety in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* and Shymalan's *The Village*****Grade: 10<sup>th</sup>****Stage 1: Desired Results****Understandings**

When a fear or anxiety transcends an individual or a small group and becomes the anxiety of an entire culture, particularly when perpetuated by those in power, that group becomes prey to peer pressure, victim to abused authority, and commits acts it might otherwise consider immoral. Logic, intervention, and oftentimes, tragedy cause these anxieties to dissolve.

**Essential Questions**

How do cultural anxieties manifest themselves? Who perpetuates them? To what effect? What causes those anxieties to dissipate?

**Knowledge**

*Students will know...*

- Structure of a dramatic text
- Elements of drama
- Historical background of text including Miller's biography, McCarthyism, and history of the Salem witch trials

**Skills**

*Students will be able to...*

- Write an effective summary-response
- Show understanding of drama by performing textual excerpts
- Show command of dramatic language (both structure and elements)
- Develop connections between and among related texts
- Effectively analyze visual as well as written text

**Stage 2: Assessment Evidence****Performance Task:**

Choose a cultural anxiety that currently infiltrates one of the societies you inhabit: your family, a classroom, a clique, your school, your city, your state, your country, your religion, your team, or another of your choosing. First, determine the prevalence of that anxiety. Consider, for example, an online poll, a paper survey, or an interview system that would give you an array of results from the people who inhabit that culture. Next, aggregate your results. How prevalent is your cultural anxiety? How does it affect that culture? Lastly, take action. Determine what you will do to cause that anxiety to dissipate. You will, then, turn in a summary response that reveals that results of your research; why you, then, decided to take the action you did; and how this affected or didn't affect your cultural anxiety.

**Other evidence:**

- Each student will be an acting participant in a reader's theater over Act III.
- Students will submit a summary-response over one other act. This summary-response, in addition to demonstrating their understanding of this writing skill, will also ask them to employ the vocabulary associated with dramatic elements and structure.
- Students will submit their graphic organizer over background information.
- Students will take a check for understanding over the structure and elements of drama.

**Stage 3: Learning Activities****Day One:**

- **4 corners** about culture: X, Y, and Z are all examples of cultures. Arapahoe has a definite, definable culture. Culture is static. One can inhabit many cultures. Etc.
- Because this is the first day of school, we will also use this time to discuss the culture we want in our classroom (aka fun with class policies).

**Day Two:**

- Watch Nirvana "[Smells like Teen Spirit](#)" video. According to VH1, this music video defines the 90's culture. While we watch, 3 columns of notes. Column 1: what sticks out. Column 2: questions about what sticks out. Column 3: Answers to those questions that help you make cultural inferences.
- Reciprocal teaching using "[Unnatural killers](#)" article by John Grisham. (This article entreats a copycat crime of the movie *Natural Born Killers* and asks if Stone, the movie's director, should be culpable for the criminals' actions.)
- HW: read "Columbine lawsuit..." article and add to 3 column chart. (This article is of a similar ilk; it discusses the Harris and Klebold's passion for the video game *Doom* and if its creator should be held liable for the crimes of the Columbine shooters.)

**Day Three:**

- Warm-up: read through list, particularly engaging in last column. Highlight 3 interesting observations you made or questions you had.

- Define cultural anxiety. What is the biggest cultural anxiety of the 90's? How do we know? How did it affect that generation's culture? Possible answers include fear of rebellion and fear of blame.
- Small group activity: put students in groups and have them determine a culture they all inhabit. By putting them in groups as opposed to letting them choose their own, students will have to explore the concept of culture in more depth.  
Find an external source—song lyrics, video, article—that captures the identity and anxieties of that culture. Be prepared to present them in class...
- Elements of drama and dramatic structure pretest (use quiz tool on Google or Yahoo so it immediately aggregates)
- HW: look for external sources that capture your culture that you can share with your group tomorrow. Write down sources or bring information in on a flash drive.

#### Day Four:

- Small group activity: share the external sources you brought in. Determine in your group which best encapsulates the culture you chose as well as its anxieties.
- **Small group presentations.** While students present, have observers choose 1 group other than their own and determine that culture's anxieties and how they arrived at that conclusion. Pick these up as students are leaving to check for their understanding.
- **Introduce guiding questions** and performance assessment
- HW: **blog post**—write about a time in which you did something you now regret or regard as out of character that you did out of a group think, cultural anxiety mentality. I will also post one of my stories first to model the expectations and personal connection to this concept.

#### Day Five:

- Time to review people's blog posts. **Polleverywhere.com:** to what extent do cultural anxieties influence us and the choices that define who we are? Frequently, somewhat, rarely, never. Discuss.
- Instruct students on how to build graphic organizer for webquest. This webquest asks students to explore actual interrogations from the trials as well as history of some of the accused and accusers.
- Work on webquest
- Distribute *The Crucible* and elements of drama and structure of drama vocabulary while students work. Choose the 10 most important words that students seem least familiar with; research shows 8-10 words are maximum for deep understanding (Fisher).
- HW: read introduction to *The Crucible* for day 8. (This is the Bigsby introduction from the Penguin Classics version. It is 18 pages of pretty dense text, so I want to give them a few days to fight through it.) Choose 3 most important passages to contribute to your graphic organizer and to share in discussion. Frayer model flashcards of elements and structure for day 7.

#### Day Six:

- Finish webquest
- Time to read introduction/ study elements and structure if you finish early.
- HW: read introduction to *The Crucible* for day 8. Choose 3 most important passages to contribute to your graphic organizer that you want to share in discussion. Frayer model flashcards of elements and structure for day 7.

#### Day Seven:

- **Chalk talk** using information from graphic organizers: The most interesting information I found was...The biggest questions I still have are...Connections I made include...
- Tic tac toe with elements of and structure of drama.
- HW: read introduction to *The Crucible* for day 8. Choose 3 most important passages to contribute to your graphic organizer that you want to share in discussion. Study flashcards in preparation for check for understanding over structure and elements of drama on day 9.

#### Day Eight:

- Warm-up on how to create effective text-based questions (i.e. text-to-text, text-to-world, etc.). Model with "Making Enemies: Post 9-11 Crackdowns Spurring Prejudice". Pyne's article connects well to our thematic ideas and is a quick read that would allow us to work on this type of questioning together before they independently practice.
- Have students use the passages they brought in today to develop similar text-based questions.
- **Wagon wheel discussion** over introduction (see protocol at msrfharmony.org)
- **Collect their graphic organizers** over Puritan and text background information.
- HW: Study flashcards in preparation for check for understanding over structure and elements of drama on day 9.

#### Day Nine:

- **Check for understanding over structure and elements of drama.**
- **3-2-1 prompt** frontloading texts: Examine the structure of the text looking over such important textual

features as the cover, the cast, the number of acts, the date of publication, and the author's biography. First, make 3 connections to what you learned about the Puritans. Make 2 predictions about Miller's play. Lastly, ask one question about something that confuses you or that you're wondering about.

- **T-P-S** with their 3-2-1s from textual structure.
- Distribute handout on reading log and go over.
- My think aloud with the beginning of *The Crucible*. These think alouds to which I refer throughout the unit will include me beginning the next section of reading out loud and also modeling my thinking. For example, "Based on this passage, I wonder if..." or "According to this act, I predict that..." This will model my expectations for the annotations they will begin in our next unit.
- HW: read to end of pg 22 (when Abigail says "John, pity me! Pity me!"). While you read, focus on guiding question, preparing for reader's theater and reading log. Also, specifically for this section, seek to understand characters. Who are they? Which characters perpetuate cultural anxiety? Which dispel them? How do those in each group compare and contrast?

#### Day Ten:

- **Shades of meaning** with 2 different groups. (This exercise uses paint chips to have students determine their thinking on a scale.) Firstly, among the characters introduced. Who seems to have the most power? The least power? How do we know? Have them choose a shade of meaning for each character and on their shade, to choose a quote that defends their position for that character. In their 2<sup>nd</sup> spectrum, which characters best seem to subscribe to and perpetuate the anxieties of that culture. Again, how do we know? Ask them to juxtapose their spectrums and make 3 observations; be sure they write those observations in their notes as we will come back to them later in the play. What do they notice? I am hoping they will understand those with the power seem to most perpetuate those anxieties and those with the least power deny them.
- Debrief. Ask them to consider how they think the cultural anxiety element might change and why. Specifically examine interaction on 20-22 with Abigail and John. No, she may not have power in the traditional sense (money or social stature), but she clearly has power to manipulate. How could she use this to perpetuate the group think that is infiltrating their culture? Why did Miller change the dynamic of this relationship so it is a sexual one?
- Think aloud beginning the next section of reading.
- HW: read to end of the description of Hale on pg 34 ("the Fiend himself"). While you read, focus on guiding question, preparing for reader's theater and reading log. In description of Hale and ensuing commentary on religion, determine one most important word, 1 most important passage, and 1 most important idea.

#### Day Eleven:

- **Begin by having students share their words, passages, and ideas** in small groups and, using these, to create a wordle ([www.wordle.net](http://www.wordle.net)) on their computer. What emerges? What is Miller's point?
- Listen to Rolling Stones' "Sympathy for the Devil" and ask students to make connections between our wordle the song's lyrics.
- **Whole class debrief and discussion:** what are both artists saying about evil, the devil and the connection between cultural anxiety and religion?
- Think aloud with beginning of next section of reading.
- HW: rd to end Act I. While you read, focus on guiding question, preparing for reader's theater and reading log. Also consider what we talked about today with Miller's description of Hale and ensuing commentary as well as our responses to "Sympathy for the Devil". Choose 1 passage that best connects to today's discussion (aim for no more than a 1/2 pg). Reading log for act one-ers due day 12.

#### Day Twelve:

- **Collect reading logs for act 1.**
- Listen to "Sinner's in the Hands of an Angry God" and have them answer these questions: *What* is this sermon's purpose? *How* does it evoke its purpose? In other words, what tactics does it employ? *Why* do you think the Puritans valued this sermon? In other words, what did it offer them? Connect one line from the sermon to the passage you brought in for today.
- **Revisit and build on discussion from yesterday:** what are both artists saying about evil, the devil and the connection between cultural anxiety and religion?
- Think aloud with beginning of next section of reading
- HW: rd Act II through bottom of 59 when Hale enters ("his manner now"). While you read, focus on guiding question, preparing for reader's theater and reading log. Also seek to characterize John and Elizabeth's relationship. What is the most important thing we learn about their relationship in these pages? Identify one passage that supports your response.

#### Day Thirteen:

- **Save the last word for me** with their passages and “what we learned...” from last night’s reading. Using that, have them revisit their shades of meaning spectrums from day 10. Based on what we learn about Elizabeth and John’s relationship, where would they fall in that structure of power? Where do they fall in their adherence to cultural anxiety?
- **K-W-L** with Joseph McCarthy as a whole class and give them time to do some internet research.
- Connect first 2 activities with **ticket out the door**: McCarthy able to condemn communists and “communists” just as Abigail and Hale able to do the same. What do all these individuals have in common? What can we use this information to understand about who perpetuates cultural anxieties?
- HW: finish Act II. While you read, prepare for reader’s theater and reading log. Focus particularly on question about what causes cultural anxieties to dissipate. Clearly this anxiety is far reaching. What and who will it take to change it? Reading log for Act IIers due day 14.

#### Days fourteen through eighteen:

- **Collect Act II reading logs.**
- Introduce **reader’s theater** for Act III. After students choose their groups and scenes, have them read using reciprocal teaching. Next, they will have two days to finish reading and prepare their scenes and scripts, and we will have two days of performance.
- HW: for day 19, read to pg. 123 before John enters Elizabeth’s cell (“Let me speak with him”). Look for 3 pieces of evidence that characters that hadn’t previously are now succumbing to their culture’s group think. Why is this? Reading log for Act IVers due day 20.

#### Day nineteen:

- Research the Stanford prison experiment. What intriguing ideas does this experiment present about our susceptibility to group think as well as the effects of this mentality? Give students time to research and record their connections.
- **Connections discussion** using passages from last night’s reading and their research.
- Think aloud with the next section of Act IV.
- HW: rd “Bystander Theory” chapter from Gladwell’s *The Tipping Point*. What prevalent cultural anxiety does Gladwell identify? According to Gladwell, how does this anxiety affect our culture? What does his research tell us in terms of what needs to transpire for this anxiety to dissolve? **Have students post their response to at least one of the questions on the class blog for tomorrow.**

#### Day twenty:

- **Begin by discussing** most interesting, engaging responses posted to class blog. As we finish Act IV, consider similar questions: by the book’s conclusion, does the cultural anxiety of witchcraft in Salem still exist? To what extent? How do we know? What could have caused this anxiety to dissolve? What would both Gladwell and Miller argue is necessary to obliterate a culture’s group think?
- Finish Act IV in class using a think aloud. Then, give students time to record their notes in response to each of these questions.
- **Stand and share with their answers.**
- Review performance assessment guidelines. Have students form groups and create a Google doc where they can work from home on developing and refining their proposal.
- HW: reading log over Act IV due day 21. Proposal for performance assessment due day 23.

#### Days twenty-one and twenty-two:

- **Collect Act IV reading logs.**
- Watch *The Village*.
- While we watch, have students keep 3-column notes. In one column, interesting observations and analysis. In column 2, connections to *The Crucible*. In column 3, connections to our guiding question, particularly focusing on the last one. John may have caused his culture’s anxiety to dissolve, but didn’t. What does it take?
- HW: work on performance assessment.

#### Day twenty-three:

- **Talking chips discussion** over students’ 3-column notes. Begin class by having them pick out their 2 or 3 most important ideas, and give them talking chips according to how many I have them choose (2 or 3).
- Time to refine performance assessment proposal due at the end of class and determine next steps.
- HW: work on performance assessment.

#### Days twenty-four through twenty-eight:

- Mini-lessons on summary-response skills students struggled with in their reading logs and time to work on performance assessment. Also, on readwritethink there is a lesson about writing effective survey questions. Perhaps share this with them.
- HW: presentations on performance assessments and summary-responses due on day twenty-nine.

#### Days twenty-nine through thirty-one:

- **Collect students' summary-responses for performance assessment.**
- **Presentations.** While other groups are presenting, give students a task each day so they're actively engaged in and thinking about their classmates presentations. Collect these for completion and give them as feedback to the presenting groups.
- Day 29: **Connect-extend-challenge.** How do the ideas and information presented connect with what you already knew? What new ideas did you get that extended or pushed your thinking in new directions? Challenge your classmates' ideas—what questions do you still have? How could they take this farther? Etc.
- **Day 30: I used to think....now I think**
- **Day 31: 3-2-1**

**Days thirty-two through thirty-four: flex days**



# Cultural Anxieties:

## a performance assessment

### Objective:

In addition to demonstrating your ultimate understanding of our guiding questions-- How do cultural anxieties manifest themselves? Who perpetuates them? To what effect? What causes those anxieties to dissipate?—this assessment asks you to connect these questions to your world as well as to show your ability to write an effective summary-response.

### Directions:

Choose a cultural anxiety that currently infiltrates one of the societies you inhabit: your family, a classroom, a clique, your school, your city, your state, your country, your religion, your team, or another of your choosing.

First, determine the prevalence of that anxiety. Consider, for example, an online poll, a paper survey, or an interview system that would give you an array of results from the people who inhabit that culture.

Next, aggregate your results. How prevalent is your cultural anxiety? How does it affect that culture?

Lastly, take action. Determine what you will do to cause that anxiety to dissipate.

You will, then, turn in a summary response that reveals that results of your research; why you, then, decided to take the action you did; and how this affected or did not affect the cultural anxiety you attempted dispel.

### Steps:

First, determine if you would like to work alone or with a group. Everyone will turn in a summary-response individually, but you can conduct your research, look at your results, etc. in a group if you wish.

Next, choose a culture you are interested in studying and what anxieties permeate that culture. For example, if you chose to investigate the culture of honors students at Arapahoe High School, determine what fear most drives their words and actions.

Thirdly, consider how you will investigate that anxiety. A poll? A survey? Interviews? Something else? What questions will you ask? Determine which format would best lend itself to accuracy and honesty depending on the group you choose. Also consider how the wording of your questions, for example, might lead to certain answers.

Within that culture, determine the participants in your research. Be sure you obtain a random sampling and a wide enough sampling that you can aggregate your results.

After you've determined how you will proceed with these steps, please **submit a formal, typed proposal to me that responds to each of these prompts in detail**. I will need to approve your proposal before you proceed with your research.

Following the completion of that research, analyze your results and determine how you will take action to dispel this anxiety.

After taking that action, decide as a group how you will present each facet of your project to the class. Look over the analysis and application rubric below to understand what your presentation should show.

Each person should also complete a summary-response that summarizes the actions you took, what you discovered, and, in your response, how this furthered your understanding of our guiding question. Review the knowledge and skills rubric below so writing objectives are clear.



Rubric:

Analysis and Application (group grade)

| Excellent  | Good  | Fair  | Incomplete   |
|--|---|---|--|
| Subject of study reveals in-depth understanding of the concept of cultural anxiety.  | Subject of study reveals understanding of the concept of cultural anxiety.  | Subject of study reveals some confusion about the concept of cultural anxiety.  | Subject of study reveals lack of understanding of the concept of cultural anxiety.   |
| Thoughtful investigation of chosen cultural anxiety transpired. A random contingency of that culture participated in the investigation. This contingency responded to a variety of objective prompts that at least consider what that anxiety looks like, how and how creates it, and how it affects that culture. | Investigation of chosen cultural anxiety transpired. A contingency of that culture participated in the investigation. This contingency responded at least 1 prompt regarding what that anxiety looks like, how and how creates it, and how it affects that culture. | Investigation of chosen cultural anxiety transpired; however, studied members of that culture were so few, as were the prompts connecting to manifestation, creation and effects, that anxiety was barely explored. | Research occurred; however, that research showed no evident relationship to guiding questions about cultural anxiety OR no research transpired.  |
| Results of research were thoughtfully and thoroughly analyzed to determine a variety of original, profound conclusions that deepened understanding of guiding questions.   | Results of research were analyzed to determine conclusions that reinforced understanding of guiding questions.  | Research was examined through the lens of guiding questions, but seeming lack of analysis resulted only in determination of ideas rather than conclusions.  | Results were not analyzed or analysis showed no exploration of results in relation to guiding questions.   |
| Action taken to dispel anxiety showed in-depth understanding of research results and thoughtful consideration of how to efface group think.  | Action taken to dispel anxiety showed understanding of effacement of group think but may not show a clear relationship to research results.   |   | Action was taken; however, it was not evident how that action connected to group's understanding of obliterating a cultural anxiety. It also may fail to relate to research. OR No action was taken. |

**\*\*Because the summary-response will be assessed according to the writing skills we study based on their areas of deficiency as determined by their reading logs, this rubric will be added closer to the assessment.\*\***